

Comic-Book *Crás!*: Brazilian Comics and Publishing Industry¹

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Abstract

This article has the objective of rescuing the trajectory of Brazilian comics in the 1970s, a period considered of special relevance for the advancement of the sequential graphic art in Brazil. In this period, initiatives of small publishing companies located in some Brazilian states can be seen, and, also, the efforts of big publishing companies to publish national material. As a case study, it presents the *Crás!* magazine, produced by Editora Abril of São Paulo, that congregated veteran and young gifted professionals of the Brazilian sequential graphic art. The analysis of this publication discloses the difficulties Brazilian comics faced, considering the necessities and limits of the commercial publishing companies and the publishing market in the country.

Keywords: communication, Brazilian comics, 1970s, comics publishing market

Brazilian comics publishing market has been traditionally characterized by the struggle of Brazilian comics artists for more space towards the publication of their own characters and stories. Since its beginning, the competition with comics titles made abroad, specially in the United States, made the consolidation of the Brazilian comics production more difficult. In order to succeed, Brazilian comics go through the restrict alternative circuit most of the time.

The 1970s were a paradigmatic period regarding quantity and variety of comics titles in Brazil, principally when one considers the relationship between the mainstream and the alternative production. In this context, small publishing houses released low printed,

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precariously circulated comic-books, directed to small readerships. In general, these publications were short lived, having only a few editions published. However, the historical framework of Brazilian comics shows that some big mainstream publishing houses have also tried their hands in publishing native comics.

An enterprise which deserves special attention in this field is the publication of a comic-book called *Crás!* The title was released in 1974 by Editora Abril, of São Paulo, the company which still publishes the Disney comics in Brazil, as well as information magazines (*Veja*) or magazines directed to special readers (*Cláudia*, *Playboy*). *Crás!* was an

innovative and courageous experiment regarding the publishing industry. It still has to be discussed in the literature, deserving, in this respect, a serious analysis of the motives regarding its implementation as well as its ultimate demise.

With this objective, having as a background the consideration of the inherent contradictions of the Brazilian publishing industry in that regards the history of the Brazilian comics, an inventory of stories, authors, characters and narrative genders and their role in the establishment of the national production were undertaken.

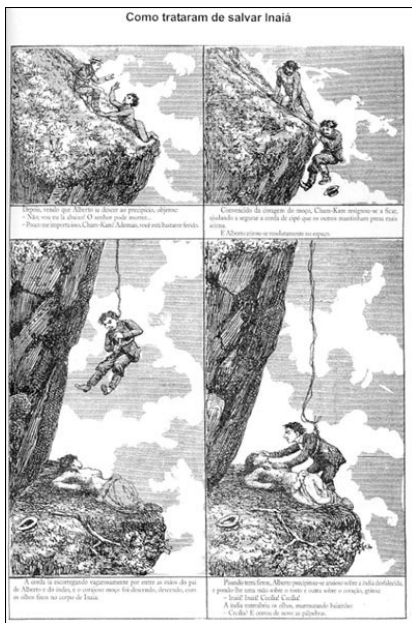


FIGURE 1 – Zé Caipora, by Angelo Agostini

The Brazilian comics

Three decades before the publication of the first North-American comics, Brazilian newspapers already counted on the printing of sequential illustrated stories. The pioneer of this artistic and communicative way of expression was an Italian-Brazilian called Angelo Agostini who wrote and drew these stories in 1867 to *O Cabrião* newspaper, in São Paulo city. His first permanent character, Nhô Quim, had his adventures serialized since January 30th, 1869 in the weekly *Vida Fluminense*. It was about a provincial man who created lots

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of confusions in his trip to the Court (Rio de Janeiro). This formula was resumed by Agostini in 1884 with the character Zé Caipora.

The Adventures of Nhô Quim were published in the magazine *Vida Fluminense*, from Rio de Janeiro. Released on January, 30th. 1869, the edition numbered 57 presented the story of country inhabitant who travels to the capital of the Brazilian Empire, the city of Rio de Janeiro and his difficulties to adapt to the new environment. This is considered by many scholars as the first comics story published in Brazil (and perhaps in all the world).

The Adventures of Zé Caipora, on the other hand, occurred in the rural environment, having as their focus the misfortunes of an inhabitant of the country and his battles against wild animals and the hostile climate of the region. Its publication began in *Revista Ilustrada*, in 1883, with its first eleven chapters published in this year, the twelfth in the next year and the thirteenth only in 1886. (Vergueiro, 2008: 12).

Agostini also created the first cover logotype to *O Tico-Tico* comic-book, to which he wrote and drew until his death in 1910. This publication, originated in October 1905 and continually published until January 1962, helped to spread comics amongst Brazilian readers. As it was directed to children, it also presented tales, games, and news. The magazine was

(...) a paradigm in the Brazilian publishing industry, being the longest lived children magazine in the country, published during 56 years. It also was the first magazine to publish comics regularly, in a period when the graphic sequential language was just beginning its first steps, facing all kind of pressures, principally in what regards its educational merits.

The Brazilian magazine answered to everything with a firm attitude regarding its didactic-pedagogical objectives, maintaining its mission of entertaining, informing and educating the Brazilian child in a healthy way. (Vergueiro e Santos, 2008: 24)

Several artists contributed to the comics pages – each story occupied from one to two pages per edition, and the majority had a humoristic content – particularly J. Carlos (Jujuba and Carrapicho, Lamparina), José Gomes Loureiro (Chiquinho, Jagunço and Benjamin), Alfredo Storni (Zé Macaco and Faustina), Oswaldo Storni (Bolota), Max Yantok (Barão de Rapapé, Kaximborn and Pipoca), Luiz Sá (Réco-Réco, Bolão and Azeitona; Faísca), Giselda (Pechincha), Carlos Thiré (*Os Três Legionários – The Three Legionaries*), and Théó (Tonico, o Caçador de Feras – Tonico, the Beast Hunter).



FIGURE 2 – Chiquinho, originally a North-american character, was drawn by native Brazilian artists in *O Tico-Tico*

The character Chiquinho was, in fact, Buster Brown, created by the Northern-American cartoonist Richard Felton Outcault in 1902. Chiquinho, who was initially copied from stories published in American newspapers, had his adventures created by several Brazilian artists, such as Loureiro, Augusto Rocha, Alfredo and Oswaldo Storni, Paulo Affonso, and Miguel Hochmann, and became one of the major stars of this comic book.

Besides comics, the publishers also presented other ways of entertainment to the readers, normally linked to educational considerations. In this respect, Merlo (2005: 84) states:

O Tico-Tico offered several kinds of entertainments: in the letter section, the readers sent their letters, exchanged experiences, photos, curiosities and drawings; in the pastime section they solved puzzles, riddles and participated in lotteries; in the short stories section, there were old histories of peoples, fairytales, Christmas stories, history of Brazil, adventure novels with very beautiful illustrations, rhymes, theatrical plays and comics (...); in the *Lessons of Grandpa*, knowledge and learning of sciences, mathematics, geography, arts and moral and civics (...). Other sections helped and collaborated for the education of children and young people (...).

In the 1930s, the publisher Adolfo Aizen, inspired by the Sundays (comics booklets inserted in the Sunday edition of Northern-American newspapers), released in 1934 the *Suplemento Infantil (Children's Supplement)* that was inserted in carioca newspaper *A Nação*. As the success was huge, from the number 16 on, with the name already changed to *Suplemento Juvenil (Juvenile Supplement)*, it started being sold separated from the

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newspaper. Other publications dedicated to comics arose soon, such as *Mirim* (1939-1942) and *Lobinho* (1939-1940), both published by Aizen, who founded in 1945 the Editora Brasil-América Ltda. – EBAL; *O Globo Juvenil* (1937-1952) and *Gibi* (1939-1950), devised by the competitor Roberto Marinho, the owner of *O Globo* newspaper; and *O Gury* (1940-1962) that belonged to Assis Chateaubriand's *O Cruzeiro* organizations. Although the majority of comics published in these editions had a Northern-American origin, there was also space for national productions. A conspicuous example in this sense was *O Suplemento Juvenil*:

In general, our artist always had the *Suplemento Juvenil* as a showcase to his art. Monteiro Filho, with Roberto Sorocaba, since the first issue opened the way that would soon be followed by a great number of clipboard artisans: Carlos Thiré, Fernando Dias da Silva, Celso Barroso, Renato Silva, Rodolpho Iltszhe, André Le Blanc, José Geraldo, Mário Pacheco, Sólton Botelho, Belfort, Sálvio Correia Lima and so many others (SILVA, 2003: 36).

Editora Abril, a small publishing house that became a large publishing industry, was founded in São Paulo in 1950. Its owner, the Italian-American Victor Civita, decided to join the comic book market under the influence of his brother Cesare who published *El Pato Donald* comic-book in Argentina since 1944, and owned the Disney comic-books copyrights for Latin America. Besides *O Pato Donald* (*Donald Duck*), Abril released *Raio Vermelho* (*Red Ray*) (53 editions published from 1950 to 1953) and *Misterix* (12 editions published in 1953). From 1959 to 2000, Brazilian artists such as Jorge Kato, Waldyr Igayara, Carlos Edgard Herrero, Renato Canini, Roberto Fukue, Moacir Rodrigues Soares, Primaggio Mantovi, Eli Leon, Euclides Miyaura, Irineu Soares, Luiz Podavin, among others, started to create stories that were starred by Disney characters. Besides Disney comics, the founder of the publishing house

(...) also released in the Brazilian publishing market other comic-books, as *Raio Vermelho* and *Misterix*, which reproduced stories created in Italy and Argentina. But the Disney comics have catapulted the company, considered the biggest publishing house in America Latina today — which diversified its activities by publishing information magazines (*Veja*), to the female (*Cláudia*) or male public (*Playboy*), besides superhero comics (from the American publishers DC Comics, Marvel and Image). The first edition of *O Pato Donald* had an 82 thousand issues print (SANTOS, 2002: 255).

With the popularization of comics starting in the 1930s, movements that reprovved the reading of these stories by young readers arose. According to Gonçalo Junior (2004), campaigns against sequential narratives were orchestrated by conservative groups led by teachers and members of the Catholic Church who considered the reading of comics harmful to the child's moral upbringing, and an attempt to divert their attention from readings considered more appropriate to them. Left-wing segments also considered comics a manner of alienation from reality since the narratives presented fantastic heroes that lived fantastic adventures in other planets or remote historical moments. Along with these attacks, Brazilian artists claimed more space for stories made in Brazil, and the decrease in publishing foreign material, specially North-American.

Such positions were kept throughout the 1950s and 1960s, when there was an alternation between moments of great consumption of comics and crisis (political, but mainly economic) that affected the Brazilian publishing market. Experiences such as the one from Cooperativa Editora e Trabalho de Porto Alegre (CETPA), created under the government of Leonel Brizola who was conducted by a nationalist posture, were in most of the times isolated and short-lived attempts that aimed at the production and release of Brazilian comics.

The Cooperativa Editora de Trabalhos de Porto Alegre appeared before that and, exactly by being conceived as a political Project with a nationalist point of view, translated in a more intense way the search for "genuinely national" roots. Its trajectory is interesting for this reason, as in a territory – comics production – dominated by foreign material, it highlights openly the intention to substitute it by stories and characters which translated the Brazilian reality. In reality, this trend would not be isolated, as we would have the advent of the Turma do Pererê and also the first stories of Mônica more or less at the same time. But the explicitly political bias of the Project as well as the different origins of their participants conferred its originality (GUAZZELLI, 2009: 12).

The Brazilian comics market in the 1970s

Although the Brazilian comics did not suffer directly from the repressive atmosphere caused by the military dictatorship that was installed in 1964 and intensified in 1968, it was influenced by historical circumstances. As Brazilian artists had to evade censorship, specially after the Institutional Act Number 5 in December 1968, they searched alternative media instead of the press to publish their protests against the authoritarianism of the regimen, like cartoons, caricatures, and comics.

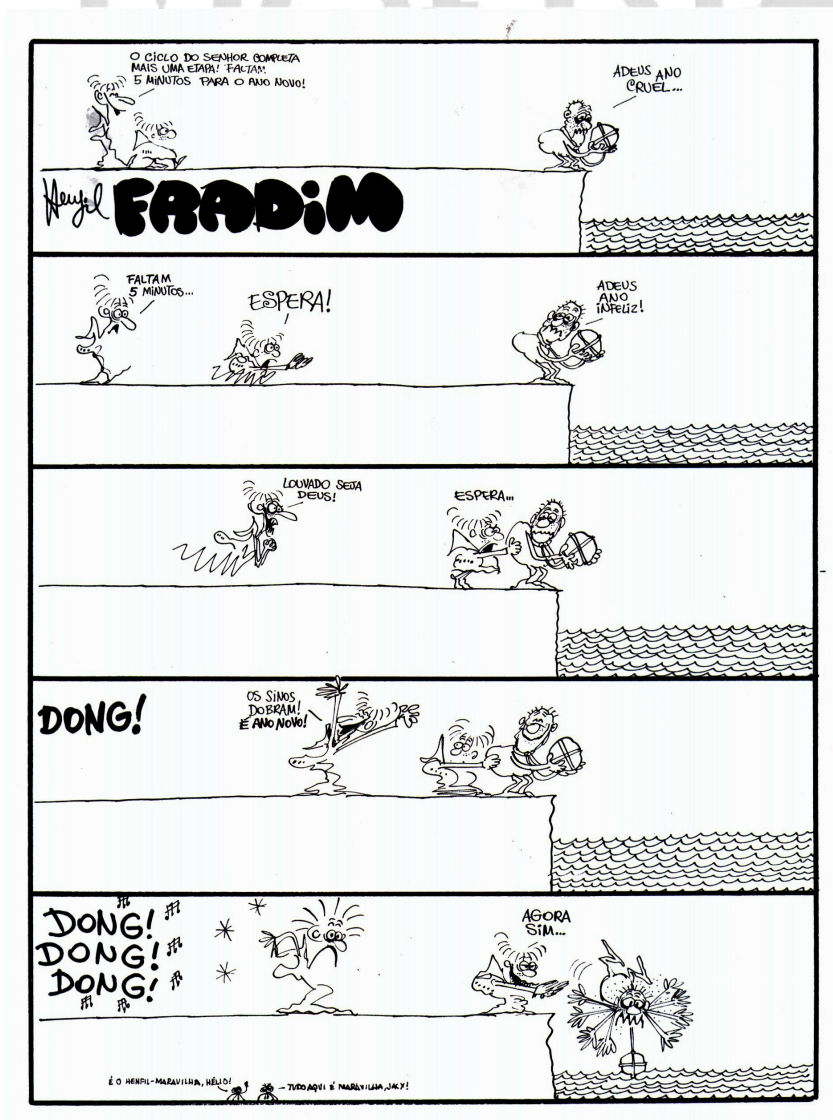


FIGURE 3 –*Fradim*, characters created by the cartoonist Henfil

One of the most important publications was the weekly *Pasquim* that brought together, besides journalists and intellectuals, artists as Jaguar, Ziraldo, and Henfil. Even though they were sometimes censored and even detained due to the bitterness of their works, these artists managed to keep alive the critical spirit during the period of exception.

Henfil conceived several characters (as the two Fradinhos, Capitão Zeferino, Graúna, etc.) and was able to maintain the comic-book *Fradim* in press during 7 years. According to Seixas (1996: 27),

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The publication of the *Fradim* comic-book, created by Henrique de Souza Filho (Henfil), started in August 1973, during the government of president Médici - the most repressive time of the country. But as well as the History of a country is the consequence of all the development of facts that configure the present moments and that announce the future perspectives, the work of a comic cartoonist also originates from the existential journey of the individual: the dialectic of the individual potentialities and of the social influences lived by each person.

Another alternative publication that arose in the early 1970s was the comic-book *Balão* devised by students from Architecture and Communication courses of University of São Paulo, including Luiz Ge and Laerte Coutinho, who tried to make formal researches without losing the power of communication with the comics' reader. This experiment represented, in the vision of Cirne (1990: 71),

(...) on one hand, the need of graphical and thematic research, capable to transgress the more traditional comic order or conservative (mean: American comics); on the other, the need to fight the economic and ideological invasion of mainstream comics, the traditional and conservatives ones. For the first time in Brazil, the artists of *Balão* (...) faced the question of experimentalism.

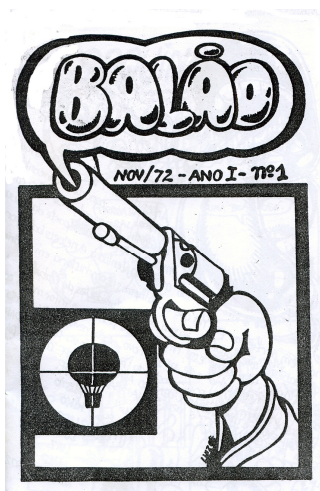


FIGURE 4 – Cover of the first edition of *Balão*, created in 1972, drawn by Luiz Gê, student of FAU-USP at the time.

From 1969 to 1979, the period in which the military dictatorship intensification was a great obstacle to freedom of expression due to the censorship, was also a plentiful moment for the Brazilian humorous production. According to Henk Driessen (*apud* BREMMER, ROODENBURG, 2000: 253), “the political humor flourishes when there is political repression and economic difficulties.” In the 1970s, alternative or *nanico* (tiny) Brazilian newspapers, as they were called, allowed cartoons and caricatures to expose their indignation against the transgressions of the authoritarian regimen.

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Comics produced by Brazilian artists or foreigners living in Brazil were published by small-scale publishing houses, as is the case of horror comics, or in alternative comic books, but a great deal was short-lived.

Two important publications arose at that time: *Grilo* and *O Bicho*. The first one had a total of 48 editions published from 1971 to 1972, and it was responsible for providing the Northern-American *comix underground* to the readers (Robert Crumb's and Gilbert Shelton's works, for instance), and European vanguard comics (Wolinski, Pichard, Guido Crepax, among others). The other title, published from 1975 to 1976, besides comics made abroad, also allowed the production of national comics artists such as Guidacci (Os Subterrâneos) and Fortuna (A senhora e seu bicho muito louco – The lady and her crazy animal). According to Cirne (1990, p. 72), *O Bicho*, that was idealized by the cartoonist Fortuna to Codecri (publishing house of *Pasquim* newspaper):

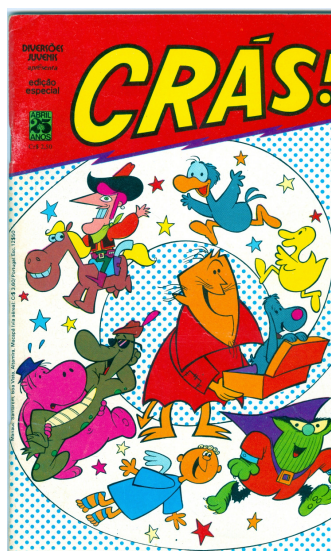
(...) was equally important for his archeological research on the Brazilian comics knowledge. In the first edition, the usual caricatures of Seth (Álvaro Marins), in the third edition, the anthological Luiz Sá, in the fourth edition, Vão Gôgo (Millôr Fernandes) and Carlos Estevão are remembered through “ignorabus, the Storyteller”; in the last edition, in November 1976, the newcomer Max (Jaguar), with “O Capitão” strips that were published initially in *Senhor* magazine, in 1962.

In the state of Paraná, in the South of Brazil, the publishing house Grafipar published, in the second half of the 1970s, several Erotic or Horror comics made by national artists, such as Watson Portela and Julio Shimamoto, among others. Larger publishing houses that focused on more commercial comics also published periodicals containing stories and characters created by Brazilian scriptwriters and drawers. Rio Gráfica Editora (RGE), now Editora Globo, released in newsstands the magazine called *Sacarrolha* from the Italian-Brazilian artist Primaggio Mantovi. On the other hand, Editora Abril was the responsible for the release of titles containing Mauricio de Sousa's characters, such as *Mônica* (1970), *Cebolinha* (1973), *Pelezinho* (1977) etc., for the return of *Turma do Pererê* (1975), from Ziraldo, and for *Crás!*, which gathered veteran artists' works, like Jayme Cortez and Nico Rosso; comics artists who already worked for the publishing house, like Waldyr Igayara, Renato Canini, and Carlos Edgard Herrero; and new

talents of the national comics at that time, like César Roberto Sandoval and Ciça (Cecília Alves Pinto), among others.

Comic book *Crás!*

As a bold initiative from Editora Abril, the publication of *Crás!* reflected the problems faced by Brazilian comics artists and the publishing industry in Brazil to achieve and retain readers' interest. One of the creators of this title was the writer and publisher Cláudio de Souza, an employee of the company since the 1950s, and at the time he managing Abril's publications for teens and children. According to Gonçalves Junior (2003, p. 186-188):



Cláudio decided then that the time had come to open more space for Brazilian artists and their own creations – an old project of his in Abril. And he started to defend what could be his most personal proposal in the publishing house: “Crás!” The format of the book was European – like “Veja” – which became popular in countries like Italy, France and Spain, where they were considered titles, such as “Linus”, “Eureka”, “Pilote” and “Metal Hurlant”.

These publications had an apparently confusing formula, but it proved to be efficient: it mixed both new and old stories, serious and children's, national and foreign, funny and dramatic characters. With “Crás!”, besides offering a panorama of the current Brazilian production, it intended to serve as a testing space where more prominent characters could reach their own titles.

With the growth of Abril in the last years, Cláudio believed that the publishing house could afford a publication that did not have the objective of only achieving hundreds of thousands of copies.

FIGURE 5 – Cover of the comic book *Crás!*, which presents the main characters

So, it is possible to conclude that the idea appeared in a spontaneous way, coming from an idealistic vision of the employees of the publishing company. Most of them were veterans in the comics' production and edition field, longing for an environment that propitiated bigger space for their own productions, instead of the mere reproduction of foreign material.

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Main artists and characters

Crás! comic book, specially in its two first editions, brought a mixture of graphic styles and genres such as horror, humor, adventure, children etc. Artists with diverse tendencies, comprehending since classical style stories and Northern-American adventures comic strips until the psychedelic experience in the 1970s, went through the pages of the publication. Among them starred Renato Canini, with Kactus Kid; Carlos Edgard Herrero, with Lobisomem (Werewolf); and Ruy Perotti, with Satanésio. These characters became symbols of the publication and reached readers in such a way that after more than 30 years these readers still remember them.

The gaúcho cartoonist Renato Canini participated in the experience of appreciation and dissemination of national comics promoted by CETPA in the 1960s to which he drew the character Zé Candango. In the early 1970s, Canini started to create, several times in partnership with the scriptwriter Ivan Saindenberg, Zé 'Joe' Carioca's stories to Editora Abril, giving the Brazilian parrot invented by Walt Disney and his team in 1942 some typical characteristics from the reality and culture of Brazil: more streetwise, he becomes an inhabitant of a carioca hill, plays soccer, parades with the samba school from the neighborhood, and tries to overcome the lack of money.

The stories featuring the cowboy Kactus Kid created by Canini are present in six editions of *Crás!* and they are parodies from films and comics of the *western* genre. The reversal of expectations, that is typical in humorous narratives, is in the character itself: the hero is, in fact, the losing funeral agent Zeca Funesto – a bald, toothless, and ugly fellow – who needs to wear a red wig and dentures and make a cleft on the chin (regarding the Northern-American actor Kirk Douglas) so that he can become the gunman Kactus Kid.



FIGURE 6 – Renato Canini’s *Kactus Kid* is a satire of the cowboy movies

Icons and clichés from the *western* genre and Northern-American TV series are targets of jokes in *Kactus Kid*’s stories: the Northern-American actor was caricatured in one of the stories; on the other hand, the bandit Billy The Kid was satirized with the name BÍli Toquinho and confused with a boy. In another story, the hero finds out that the indians do not attack at night because they watch *western* movies broadcasted by the TV. Metalanguage is frequently used, like in the story in which some indians are drawn in a realistic way, contrasting with Canini’s cartoony style, but the central character reassures: “Don’t worry! They are not from our story!” During the shootout, the cowboy’s gun fires more than forty shots without loading. *Kactus Kid* justifies: “A good guy’s weapon is just like that!” In the end of the adventure, to put an end to the dispute, the negotiator Henry Kissinger, dressed as a cowboy, is thrown over the hero and his horse.

Comics featured by Disney characters were also the entrance door in Editora Abril for the illustrator paulista Carlos Edgard Herrero. This artist composed narratives published even abroad with Donald Duck and Mickey, and he was the co-creator of the character Morcego Vermelho (Red Bat). He also drew comic and metalinguistic stories in which Peninha composes comics to Uncle Scrooge’s newspaper.

Metalanguage and self-irony are also the keynote in Lobisomem’s stories that Herrero composed in partnership with the scripwriter Júlio Andrade Filho, giving continuity to a collaboration previously successful, when they created together Vavavum’s adventures, a racing driver whose car travels in time. Set on a European bourg during Medieval Times, the narratives published in *Crás!* by both of them are starred by a clumsy

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werewolf that can't frighten and attack his victims. As he drinks a potion prepared by a witch to cure his bronchitis, the werewolf turns into other characters of the magazine, like the bird Onofre (Júlio Andrade and Michio Yamashita's character) and the cowboy Kactus Kid.

Ruy Perotti, in his turn, started his career in Editora Brasil-América Ltda. (EBAL), created by the publisher Adolfo Aizen. Besides comics, Perotti also worked in Publishing and composed cartoons like Sujismundo, a character that starred federal government's educational institutional campaigns in the 1970s and that taught hygienic practices to the population.

His character, the "poor devil" Satanésio, gained a lot of attention in *Crás!* comic-book. When the military government's official advertisement divulged the *economic miracle*, Perotti's stories showed a bankrupt hell due to the violence and misunderstandings that illustrate the society. Due to this reason, Satanésio, in worn-out clothes with patches,



decides to leave the deserted infernal depths and go to the Earth where he imagined he could change his life. However, arriving there, Satanésio found a place inhabited by uncompromising, dishonest and brutal people who did not fear him. To make things worse, the guardian angel Anjoca appears in the second adventure and begins guarding the evil in such hostile world.

FIGURE 7 – Satanésio and Anjoca, characters created by Ruy Perotti

Other characters that appear in Satanésio's stories are the hippie Pacífico, the brawny Zé Tacape and João Porrete, the feminist Lutércia, and the bad boy Bernardão, that represented disagreeing points at that time. In order to survive amid chaos and barbarity, the protagonist needs to work like a ghost train conductor or sell popcorn at the circus.

The good acceptance of Satanésio by the readers made Editora Abril release a title to the character. *Satanésio* comic-book, "son" of *Crás!*, had four editions, starting in June

1975. Perotti was also the creator of *Gabola's* stories, the intelligent monkey whose stories were equally published by Abril in its own title, from October 1976 to June 1977, reaching a number of six editions.

It can be noticed that the three characters more cherished by the readers – Kactus Kid, Lobisomem and Satanésio –, have in common the fact that they represent society's losers in a humorous way. Allegorically and perhaps unconsciously, they reflected the reality lived by comics authors from Brazil, forced to roam around publishing houses to find jobs, subject to commercial rules from the publishing industry, and facing difficulties in order to have their characters accepted. On the other hand, the readers identified with such creations as a result of the situation in Brazil at that time.

A new proposal of comic publication

A product that combines several tendencies from Brazilian comics at that time with a publishing experience of a company geared towards the market, *Crás!* comic-book can be understood as a bold proposal that attempted to spread the national comics production to an audience accustomed to more traditional and commercial comics. However, it seems that it was much more an initiative related to publishers and artists' idealism that worked at that time at Editora Abril than an institutional strategy of this large publishing house to open the market to national productions.

In this initiative there was still a clear intention towards increasing the value of the comics language as a legitimate way for artistic manifestation, which is strengthened by a series of materials showed in the second and third magazine covers, focusing the *History of comics in Brazil*. In a total of six chapters, these texts signaled to the reader that the product he had in hands gave continuity to a tradition of sequential graphic narrative in which Brazil was included. Nevertheless, although it seems evident that such insertion was well received by readers already involved in the comics atmosphere, for whom those information only intensified familiar knowledge, it is questionable whether the message was received in the same way by the ordinary reader of comic books from the publishing house. Perhaps the inclusion of this kind of material was only a nuisance or a distraction to this reader in relation to the content that was really interesting to be read.

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As a publishing product, the publication presented several divergences in relation to the products Editora Abril released in the market at the time, basically funny animals genre children's comic books with characters already known by young readers – the case of Disney comic books –, and titles with groups of children already spread in newspaper comic strips that were well established on the market – cartoonist Mauricio de Sousa's comic books. This way, the proposition of *Crás!* comics was a risky bet to reach, at the same time, as much readers of this age group as from a different age group, betting on a positive answer for their part to a group of characters totally unknown. Add to this the fact that the first four editions of the title were considered part of the label *Diversões Juvenis* (2ª série) – *Juvenile Amusements, 2nd Grade* –, intended to present characters still unknown to the readers, like *Abbot and Costello*, *The Pink Panther*, *The Roman Holidays*, *Laurel & Hardy*, among others, and some of them achieving their own publications.

Unfortunately, the readers' reaction, as it could be seen from some manifestations inserted in the number two of the magazine, was at least contradictory. For one thing, part of them applauded the initiative, considering it as merited and well-meaning, with the objective of increasing the value of national comics. On the other hand, there were readers who, like Mauro Sérgio Silva Osório, found strange the publishing line art style adopted by the comics: “What intrigued me was the fact that you gathered several line art styles in a single comic book. Would not the line art style be uniform from start to end?” asked him. Others, for their turn, questioned the mixture of styles and genres. It was the case of Alex Kauffman, who manifested his opinion as the following: “This comic book shows both serious and light stories, which, in my opinion, is not very good.”

The only female voice among the readers unhappy with the comics seems to have been from Adriane Eli de Souza Sandano, from Niterói, that questioned the publishers: “If it is said that CRÁS! accepts amateur and professional works, why have you started publishing established cartoonists' works? Would it not much limit the amateurs' opportunities?”

Even though it is possible to argue that the letters included in the readers messages section are a selected sample, when chosen by publishers and published in a balanced way with three of them favorable and the same number against the publishing line adopted by

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the comics, they are emblematic for showing up the readers' collective understanding about the proposal of the comics. This understanding was probably in the root of the unsatisfactory answer the title obtained in terms of sale, reason for its future discontinuity. According to the cartoonist and scriptwriter Primaggio Mantovi, one of the contributors of *Crás!* comic-book, 80 thousand copies of this comic book were sold when the expected result was at least 100 thousand (*apud* NARANJO, 2005).

Issues related to the own characteristics of the consumption market in the country can equally be at the background of the unsuccessful attempt of publishing *Crás!*. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the first half of the 1970s represented an uncertain moment to the Brazilian society. Recently attacked by an institutional measure that greatly limited individual liberties and curtailed the free organization, the population in general lived a situation of indecision between remaining comfort with the actual set up and challenging the new ones, associated with the consequences that the second option could bring. This way, to keep connected to what was familiar and accepted seemed to be a more viable alternative for a large segment of the Brazilian consuming audience, which indulged in its traditional consuming visits to newsstands and usual products. Taking chances with other options did not bring immediate benefits. Much on the contrary.

It can be said that the situation changed in the following decades, as the democratic normality was reinstated in the country and the clouds of repression gradually faded. At the time of the publication of *Crás!*, they were too heavy for any reversal of expectative. Thus, it is possible to imagine that more than a result of exceeded idealism of publishers and artists, the comic-book also owes its short life to the fact of being ahead of its time. On the other hand, a third evidence cannot be disregarded in the analysis of the experience of the publication of a comic book with assorted themes and characters in a big publisher: the inexperience of Brazilian authors with the maintenance of serialized stories.

Part of the authors involved with *Crás!* did not have a contractual relationship with Editora Abril or, on the other hand, added the collaboration to that comic-book to many responsibilities with other publishers. It represented, therefore, a burden to be carried by many of them, creating difficulties to maintain any periodicity of the title. This is what the verification of the interval of publication among the comic book editions, which sometimes

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reached more than four months, seems to confirm. In a market basically supported by collectionism, the irregularity of publications represented a further obstacle – perhaps decisive – to the loyalty of the readers. Thus, it would not be unfair to affirm that aspects related to the internal organization of the publication of the comic book greatly influenced its trajectory. Perhaps it became a victim of the limited publishing planning, arising prematurely in the market without having all of its production necessities properly solved. According to this, one of the most prominent collaborators of *Crás!*, the artist Ruy Perotti, pointed out that comics artists had difficulties to meet the deadlines demanded by the publishers, which in turn aggravated the lack of periodicity of the publication.⁴

Conclusions

The publication lines adopted by large-scale publishing books are not just strategic tools for internal use. Consciously or not, they divulge to the consumers the general spectrum of the areas the publishing house intends to act on, preparing and directing its audience's expectations in relation to the products released in the market. Abrupt and inappropriately prepared changes take the risk of causing unfamiliarity in the consumer, confusing him or her as for the objectives aimed by the company and breaking off a relationship of confidence. Thus, from a situation of security and comfort in relation to the commercialized products, the reader begins to suspect the lack of direction and refuse to consume products that deviate from normality.

There is no doubt that *Crás!* comic-book represented a merited initiative for the development of comics in Brazil, pointing ways for the establishment of a constant and durable national production, as well as extending the previous experience of small-scale publishing houses. However, although with an unquestionable content and bringing the main comic artists at the time, it was not successful in terms of the audience's acceptance, being quickly removed from the market.

Clearly based on admired European magazines - in special, the Italian *Linus* and *Eureka* -, this publication had a contradiction that could have significant implications in its

⁴ Statement given in June 28th, 2002 to *Memória Viva do Quadrinho Nacional [Living Memoire of National Comics]*, project of the *Observatório de Pesquisa de Histórias em Quadrinhos* of ECA-USP.

premature demise: an editorial proposal linked essentially to adult comics, but directed to a younger public. Besides, this comic book was published in an environment of vicious consumption, in which the majority of the readers prefers to remain faithful to the known products – foreigner, in general -, than to risk buying new publications, even the ones produced in their native environment. That was, perhaps, in final instance, the biggest reason for the failure of this publication. Even so, the comic book represented a bet on the future and cannot have its importance minimized by its premature disappearance. This was, perhaps, the price to be paid for being in the vanguard of its time. It was painful, indeed, but it was necessary.

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